

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-15 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3-9, 14 and 15 are amended.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Nguyen at the personal interview held May 22 and during the September 15 and 16 and October 3 telephone conferences are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

The Office Action objects to claims 3-13 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim and indicates that claims 3-13 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. By this Amendment, claims 3 and 9 are rewritten to be in independent form, thereby placing claims 3-13 in condition for allowance.

The Office Action objects to the specification as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the subject matter recited in claim 14. By this Amendment, the specification is amended to obviate this grounds of objection.

The Office Action objects to claims 5 and 8 for informalities. By this Amendment, claims 5 and 8 are amended to obviate this grounds of objection.

The Office Action rejects claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. By this Amendment, the specification is amended to explicitly state which structures correspond to the means recited in claim 14. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 14 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Sicard (U.S. Patent 4,928,053). However, as agreed to by the Examiner during the September 16 telephone interview, the circuit disclosed in Sicard only operates when  $V_s > V_{bat}$  as disclosed

in col. 3, lines 55-57. Therefore, Sicard does not disclose or suggest the subject matter recited in amended claims 1, 14 and 15 that "when said switch unit is switched on, a second power supply voltage is supplied from said drive control circuit to said control signal supply circuit...wherein said second power supply voltage is less than said third power supply voltage."

In the October 3 telephone interview, while the Examiner agreed that claim 1 is patentable over Sicard, he indicated that Hochstein (U.S. Patent 4,6-3,269) discloses the second power supply voltage being less than the third power supply voltage. However, claim 1 further recites that "said drive control circuit further comprises a semiconductor switching device with a control terminal and a voltage-suppressing circuit disposed between the control terminal and the second power supply voltage." The voltage-suppressing circuit may be, for example, a Zener diode as disclosed in the specification on page 10, lines 1-23, and in Fig. 1, for example.

Hochstein discloses "third and fourth diodes 60 and 62 and associated resistors 64, 66 and 68 interconnecting the control signal lead, the negative electrical potential 14 and the base of the first transistor 40 for establishing a minimum voltage level from the control signal 18 for driving the first transistor 40 into conduction." (See column 3, lines 45-50). Nowhere does Hochstein or Sicard disclose a voltage suppressing circuit disposed between the control terminal and the second power supply. Therefore, claim 1 is patentable over both Hochstein and Sicard.

Claim 2 depends from claim 1, and is patentable for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1, as well as for the additional features it recites. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the rejections of claims 1, 2, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-15 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

Petition for Extension  
Request for Continued Examination  
Amendment Transmittal Letter

Date: November 10, 2003

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